An Analysis of Learner Autonomy and Autonomous Learning Practices in Massive Open Online Language Courses

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Abstract
The study investigates the perception of learner autonomy with Massive Open Online Language Course (MOOLC) participants, more specifically; (i) to what extent EFL learners in an English MOOLC are autonomous, (ii) the perception of learners' and teachers' roles in learner autonomy, and (iii) the autonomous learning practices the learners are involved in by participating in the MOOLCs. It contributes to the understanding of *online learner* as an agent in highly heterogeneous language learning contexts and the link between online learning and learner autonomy. The mixed-method design is employed to present data from a Learner Autonomy Questionnaire by Joshi (2011) conducted with 57 participants from three English MOOLCs with a variety of focus as well as a content analysis method was used on the interaction data in the form of open discussion forum posts, which were added by the participants, to create a frame of autonomous learning activities in these MOOLCs and learners' attitudes towards them. The findings show that the English MOOLC participants are highly autonomous and willing to be more responsible for their own learning. Similarly, the learners' perception of their own roles indicates a positive inclination towards autonomy. Furthermore, the participants favor the MOOLCs that encourage learner-centered and autonomous language learning practices. Due to the interactive, communicative, and collaborative nature of MOOLCs, learners are advised to develop globalized autonomous skills to participate effectively in such multicultural learning platforms because learner autonomy goes beyond traditional classrooms.
Keywords: Connectivist theory, English as a foreign language, language MOOCs, learner autonomy, massive open online language courses

Introduction

Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) are a new variety of online course that got underway in 2011 and have since evolved. The acronym MOOC describes the key characteristics of this new form of online learning. Although the interpretation is negotiable, the acronym can be put down as follows: *Massive*-the courses are offered to a great number of people, *Open*-MOOCs are free to enroll and study, *Online*-the courses are accessed via web-based platforms, and *Course*-they are for educational purposes. MOOCs help people access to education with lecturers, mentors, peers, and organized resources. MOOCs not only transmit content but also provide an open environment where students are willing to learn in a personalized way, create knowledge for themselves, and create knowledge to shape with others.

In 2008, George Siemens and Stephen Downes created the first MOOC called Connectivism and Connectivist Knowledge. It was the first driving force and became an inspiration for starting up more open online courses in Canada and the United States (Miller, 2014). The MOOC became a milestone in realizing the shift of what it means to learn. It enables Siemens (2005) to implement this theory of connectivism. Siemens' connectivist theory highlights the engagement (interaction and collaboration) between the human and digital components of MOOCs. It explains how human connections facilitates learning and diversifies the knowledge as well as how learning is disentagled from being individualist.

Among a great number of subjects that MOOCs offer via the popular platforms (Coursera, EdX, FUN, Futurelearn, MiriadaX etc.), language MOOCs (MOOLCs) gathered pace too. The notion of learning a foreign language via MOOLCs brings hot debates as much as learning anything via MOOCs. Everyone asks why one would want to be a part of a MOOLC society in the first place. The answer relates to the participants' beliefs and learning behaviors that may contribute to or impede the independent learning experiences in MOOLCs. In this regard, the most recent studies often address the issue of learner autonomy in online learning (Beaven et al., 2014; Benson, 2013; Perifanou, 2016). Brown (2013) observes that undergraduate students are unlikely to have the skills required to be autonomous learners in a MOOC. Most learners have little confidence in their own learning skills and prefer to rely on teachers' authority instead and stay in their comfort zone that does not include much risk of uncertainty. However, this new phenomenon in education has zero tolerance towards learners who are unable to manage their own learning.

Depending on the focus of the MOOLC, the current English language courses can be categorized into five: *Exam focused* (e.g. Understanding IELTS: Techniques for English Language Tests), *skill based* (e.g. A Beginner's Guide to Writing in English for University Study), *content based* (e.g. Exploring English: Language and Culture), *English language teaching* (e.g. Teaching EFL/ESL Reading: A Task-Based Approach.), *General English* (e.g. Tricky English Grammar). Such a distinction is helpful for learners to figure out for what purposes they want to participate in a MOOLC and align their objectives with the objectives of a certain MOOLC.

The present study is engaged in the first three types of MOOLCs. The central issue is to investigate to what extent the MOOLC participants are autonomous and benefit from online learning environments as well as what autonomous practices they are involved via MOOLCs. This

study on autonomy relating online language learning environments is expected to contribute to the ever-expanding issue of autonomy.

Literature review

"A MOOC is an online course with the option of free and open registration, a publicly shared curriculum, and open-ended outcomes" (McAuley et al., 2010, p. 10). The MOOCs can eliminate the demographic, economic, and geographical constraints in accessing specialized knowledge. Therefore, MOOCs become an intriguing topic among scholars and some universities. However, the number of studies investigating Massive Open Online Language Courses (MOOLCs) in various aspects is relatively few (e.g. Beaven et al., 2014; Bárcena, & Martín-Monje, 2014; Castrillo, 2014; Perifanou& Economides, 2014; Read & Rodrigo, 2014; Rubio, 2014). The key points in these studies relate to the pedagogical practices (collaboration, assessment, feedback etc.) and the code of interaction in MOOLCs. All of the concerned points boil down to autonomous learning where learners take responsibilities for their language learning experience and engagement. At this point, an extensive examination of George Siemens' connectivist theory shall be considered. The connectivist pedagogy in the MOOLCs is a collective procedure where the learners are active knowledge makers and create collective meaning with others' inclusion. Based on this pedagogical model in which learner-centeredness, flexibility, interaction, and digital inclusion are praised, Teixeira and Mota (2014) articulate their objective to "combine autonomous and self-directed learning with a strong social dimension and the interaction that make learning experiences richer and more rewarding" (p.35).

Defining learner autonomy (LA) might be a demanding job as it entails quite many learner characteristics. It was Holec (1981) who first articulated 'autonomy' in the 1979 report published by the Council of Europe. He defines it as learners' taking responsibility for their own learning. Similarly, Little (1991) states that learner autonomy not only entails learning but also learning how to learn (Little, 1994). The autonomous language learner is expected to be an independent agent in the learning. Kay et al. (2013) state "the successful MOOC student isn't your average student who has decided they need to learn" (p.72). They emphasize that students must possess certain competences, and MOOCs encourage competence-oriented open learner models that support self-guided lifelong learning. Perifanou (2014) states that MOOLCs support autonomy and give learners a chance to practice it by receiving feedback and guidance. After the development of MOOCs, learner characteristics required for successful e-learning started to evolve. Autonomy has gained importance since it is highly unlikely to benefit from a MOOLC wholly or succeed without autonomy because "A MOOC heavily depends on the autonomy of learners to control their learning process" (Davis et al., 2014). Therefore, learners will definitely have their autonomy challenged in MOOLCs.

The relation between technology and learner autonomy and how technology-involved learning practices influence autonomy have recently been in the scope of some researchers. Reinders and White (2016) state that "the use of technology for learning often requires a degree of autonomy, but also that our understanding of the impact of technology is changing our understanding of learner autonomy and, more broadly, the roles of learners and teachers" (p.143). Therefore, teachers' role is critical regarding the readiness for autonomy. Teachers' favoring autonomy leads to learner-centered, engaged, democratic, and meaningful education.

The concept of autonomy in the traditional sense is now adopted to examine the autonomous learning practices in digital and social learning environments. Among the practices of learner autonomy are goal setting and achievement, which Kop and Fournier (2010) argue to be "one of the most important algorithmic factors influencing participation in learning" (p.16). MOOLCs encourage learners to write their personal goals on their profile and survey how much time they intend to spend to achieve this goal before they start the course. It promotes learners' awareness of setting goals and managing their learning process. Setting an explicit goal and pursuing it are particularly important in MOOLCs due to the independent and voluntary nature of participation in online learning. Independent language learning (ILL) is another manifestation of autonomy. The topic of 'freeing oneself from the control of others' in language learning is highlighted by some researchers (Holec, 1981; Benson, 2013). Wenden (1991) states that achieved or intelligent learners learn how to learn, and develop learning strategies, certain skills, and attitudes in order to reach knowledge "confidently, flexibly, appropriately and independently of a teacher" (p.15). White (2008) also states that independence creates "experiences which encourage student choice and self-reliance and which promote the development of learning strategies and metacognitive knowledge" (p. 4).

Align with the ILL, time management becomes significant for learners to be involved in weekly discussions on a regular basis and not to fall behind the self-study materials and activities. The courses provide unlimited access in terms of time for utilization and completion, yet this flexibility particularly forces the learners to revise their time management skills when they decide to invest time and effort into such courses to accomplish their goals. Kay et al. (2013) also confirm that time-management skills are among the competences for learners to succeed in these courses. Since the courses are entirely voluntary, managing time is one of the issues for learners to develop time-management skills to be high achievers and completers in MOOLCs.

The MOOLCs can also provide authentic, innovative, and autonomous learning activities and materials for self-study to become more engaged in language and culture (Sokolik, 2014; Castrillo, 2014). Since learning in MOOLCs is learner-centered, the realization of the educational values of the self-study materials is important for learners to trust the quality of the course affordances. By developing positive self-study behaviors, the learners can maintain a focus on learning and choose the appropriate self-study materials that contribute to the determined learning goals.

Depending on the ideology the MOOCs employ, there is a difference between xMOOCs which are based on "the cognitive-behaviorist pedagogy" and provide "a tutor-centric model that establishes a one-to-many relationship" (Yuan & Powell, 2013; Perifanou & Economides, 2014) and cMOOCs that are designed in massive networks (Downes, 2012; Siemens, 2012). The cMOOCs are based on connectivist teaching principals, which encourage autonomy, peer-to-peer learning, social networking diversity, openness, emergent knowledge, and interactivity (Mackness et al., 2010). It is not a coincidence that language courses in MOOC platforms are cMOOCs. The nature of the connectivist MOOLCs encourages (a) interaction among providers (institutions, entrepreneurs etc.), peers, lecturers, mentors, content, and the mean of communication (the platform) and (b) collaboration among the human components of the platform as 'connectivism' is employed. It is arguable which pedagogy is more successful, but it is also clear that each attracts

and engages different learner profiles. Another remark is that the eminent relationship between lecturer and learner is a decisive factor (Little, 1995). The job of the instructor in such massive courses is to facilitate, aggregate, review, summarize, and reflect on activities in daily/weekly newsletter (Rodriguez, 2013). On the one hand, in such massive language courses, individual support or tutoring is simply not possible (Teixeira & Mota, 2014). One of the MOOC lecturers in the study by Mackness et al. (2010) states "one-to-one conversation [between instructor and participant] is simply not possible in large online courses. The interactions must increasingly be learner-to-learner, raising the need, again, for learner autonomy" (p. 271). On the other hand, lacking a teacher in charge may cause frustration among the learners who still consider the teacher as the knower and source of knowledge. Therefore, the teacher's role deserves a reading to comprehend the tacit support by the lecturers.

The most prominent feature of cMOOLCs is the social dimension, that is, interaction and collaboration in the language courses. Digital or online learning had mostly been criticized because of the absence of face-to-face interaction or authentic communication. Godwin-Jones (2014) emphasizes the importance of making a hybrid of machine learning and social learning. MOOLCs have employed a better pedagogy in terms of interaction. Sharing freely in these courses can create a more positive and non-threatening environment, though there is a downside to sharing massively. The "lack of moderation in discussion forums" where free sharing and open communication take place can result in losing sight of the real purpose of the course (Mackness et al., 2010, p. 272).

Lastly, an important integral part of MOOLCs is the self-evaluation. Self-evaluation is a well-advised way to observe the learners' progress in a MOOLC since, most of the time, no authority examines the learning process or accomplishments of the individual learners. Beaven et al. (2014) work on a continuous self-evaluation questionnaire to identify the MOOLC learners' experiences and point out the difficulties when they adopt online language learning. It is an insightful study for both course designers and learners.

In sum, the potential of MOOCs in foreign language education has not been researched thoroughly, and some issues remain unaddressed. Therefore, the distinctive feature of this study is that it investigates how learner autonomy is at work in MOOLCs and introduces the state of learner autonomy with the participants of this study.

Research questions
This study aims at answering the questions below to achieve a better understanding of the role of learner autonomy in MOOLCs as well as what autonomous practices the MOOLCs have the learners to be involved.

1. To what extent are EFL learners in an English MOOLC autonomous?
2. How do EFL learners in an English MOOLC perceive learners' roles in learner autonomy?
3. How do EFL learners in an English MOOLC perceive teachers' roles in learner autonomy?
4. What autonomous practices are EFL learners involved in by participating in an English MOOLC?

Methodology

Participants

The participants is randomly chosen from the learners registered the September 2016 session of Exploring English: Language and Culture (Course 1), the October 2016 session of Understanding IELTS: Techniques for English Language Tests (Course 2), and the September 2016 session of A Beginner's Guide to Writing in English for University Study (Course 3). They are non-native English speakers from all over the world. Therefore, online version of the questionnaire in English was sent to 300 learners via their Futurelearn profiles connecting to a Facebook account or e-mail. However, the number of returns was 57 (n (Course 1) = 20, n (Course 2) = 23, and n (Course 3)= 14).

Out of 57 students, 26 are males, and 31 are females. The majority of the participants are between 21 and 35 years old (n=37). There are three learners under 20, 13 between 36-50 and 4 between 51-65 years old while there is no one older than 65. 64.9% of the participants are employed while 15.8% are unemployed, and 19.3% are students. The majority of the participants are Asian (40%) followed by Europeans (28%), South Americans (19%), Africans (7%), North Americans (3.5%) and Australians (1.8%).

Data collection instruments, procedures, and analysis

Three particular MOOLCs i) Exploring English: Language and Culture (6 weeks) by British Council, ii) Understanding IELTS: Techniques for English Language Tests (6 weeks) by British Council, and iii) A Beginner's Guide to Writing in English for University Study (5 weeks) by University of Reading on Futurelearn platform based in the UK are analyzed. In order to determine the degree of learner autonomy among the participants of these MOOLCs, a Learner Autonomy Questionnaire (LAQ) adapted from Joshi (2011) was conducted with 57 participants with whom we contacted via their Futurelearn accounts. The LAQ includes (1) Autonomous Learning Activity Scale (ALAS) and (2) Evaluation-Sheet for Perception of the Roles (ESPR) whose results are run in IBM SPSS (Version 23). The ALAS answers RQ1, and the ESPR does RQ2 and 3. Besides, the interaction data, that is, the participants' posts in the open discussion forums are collected via tracking the participants' Futurelearn profiles to triangulate the quantitative data while answering RQ 4. 239 comments in the discussion forum of the three MOOLCs were meticulously analyzed via a macro coding system by using ATLAS.ti (Version 1.5.4) to conclude the autonomous practices the learners are involved in by participating in the MOOLCs and their views regarding the participation in such autonomous language learning. The eight macrocodes are as follows: Goal achievement, independent learning, time-management skills, self-study materials, the connectivist structure of the MOOLC, social dimensions: interaction and collaboration, lecturer/mentor-learner relationship, and self-evaluation.

Findings

Autonomy levels of EFL learners in the English MOOLCs

We considered the means ranging from 1 to 2.49 as an indication of a low level of learner autonomy, the means ranging from 2.50 to 3.49 as a moderate level, and the means ranging from 3.50 to 5 are interpreted as a high level (Özdere, 2005). Accordingly, the total mean score of ALAS that was found to be 3.62 indicates a high level of learner autonomy among the participants.

Regarding learner awareness, the majority of the learners think that they have the ability to learn English well, are able to make their own decisions and set their learning goals as well as make good use of their free time studying English, which is interpreted as high level of autonomy. The findings reveal that the learners show an ambitious level of engagement in out-of-school practices in English. The learners are willing to engage in activities that enable them to speak English in and outside of the course with teachers and peers. They mostly employ self-study techniques such as reviewing course materials, making notes, and summarizing. Also, the respondents confirm that they often read extra materials in advance besides the contents prescribed in the course (M: 3.44). Moreover, they show much interest in broader autonomous activities to benefit from web-based audio-visual materials as much as seminars, conferences, and workshops.

A good number of respondents exhibit positive attitudes towards reflecting on their strengths and weaknesses (M: 3.53). The mean of item 14 is observed to be the lowest score of all the items in the LAQ. It shows that the learners do not really consider rewarding themselves when they make progress in learning. Lastly, given that more than 95% of the learners use Internet and computers to improve their English (M: 4.53), the frequent use of technology in learning motivates a high level of learner autonomy among the MOOLC participants.

Table 1: *Level of Learner Autonomy*

Dimension	Item	Mean	SD	Int.
Learner Awareness	I-1: I think I have the ability to learn English well.	4.51	.759	High
	I-2: I make decisions and set goals of my learning.	4.19	.833	High
	I-3: I make good use of my free time in studying English.	3.72	.978	High
Self-efforts	I-4: I preview before the course (i.e. see summary, lessons etc.).	3.35	.954	Moderate
	I-5: In the course, I try to use every opportunity to take part in the activities where and when I can speak in English.	3.88	.983	High
	I-6: I speak confidently in front of the people.	3.61	1.048	High
	I-7: I make notes and summaries of my lessons.	3.56	1.086	High
	I-8: I talk to the teachers and friends outside the course in English.	3.25	1.154	Moderate
Broader Autonomous Activities	I-9: I practice English outside the course also such as: record my own voice; speak to other people in English.	3.37	1.011	Moderate
	I-10: I use audio-visual materials to develop my speech such as: listen to BBC, watch English movies, read English newspapers etc.	3.98	.916	High
	I-11: I attend different seminars, training courses, conferences to improve my English.	3.32	1.152	Moderate

Self-esteem	I-12: I note my strengths and weaknesses in learning English and improve them.	3.53	1.054	High
Use of Reference Materials	I-13: Besides the contents prescribed in the course, I read extra materials in advance.	3.44	.982	Moderate
Self-reward	I-14: When I make progress in learning, I reward myself such as: buy new things, celebrate parties etc.	2.65	1.329	Moderate
Use of Technology in Learning	I-15: I use internet and computers to study and improve English.	4.53	.782	High
	Total Mean Score	3.62		

*Interpretation of means ranging from 1 to 2.49; Low level of LA; from 2.50 to 3.49; Moderate level of LA; from 3.50 to 5; High level of LA

The second part of the questionnaire is the Evaluation-Sheet for Perception of the Roles (ESPR), which discusses the current perceptions of learners' and teachers' roles in learning from the learners' perspective. The responses show that majority of the learners share the same opinion in regard to building their own learning strategies based on individual learning styles, abilities, interest, motivation, affordances, and limitations. They also consider goal-oriented learning, time-management, self-evaluation, and interaction with others in social networks to be their own responsibilities.

Table 2: *Learners' Perceptions of Their Own Roles*

Item	Mean	SD
I-16: Students have to be responsible for finding their own ways of practicing English.	4.21	.881
I-17: Students should use much self- study materials to learn English.	4.35	.744
I-18: Students have to evaluate themselves to learn better.	4.21	.750
I-19: Students should mostly study what has been taught under the course because studying English in the course is actually for exam purpose.	3.26	1.044
I-20: Students should build clear vision of their learning before learning English.	3.95	.934
I-28: The student-teacher relationship is that of raw-material and maker.	3.65	.876

The findings show that half of the learners think that they can manage to learn independently of a teacher whereas the other half either disagrees or is undecided about how learning might be like without a teacher. The results bespeak the fact that high learner autonomy does not mean the learners ignore active teacher involvement in learning. Teachers' active presence in the learning process is desired for a more supervised learning.

Table 3: *Learners' Perceptions of Teachers' Roles*

Item	Mean	SD
I-21: A lot of learning can be done without a teacher.	3.67	1.024
I-22: Teachers have to be responsible for making students understand English.	3.56	1.069
I-23: Teachers should point out the students' errors.	4.28	.796
I-24: Teachers not only have to teach 'what' but should also teach 'how' of English.	4.49	.658
I-25: Teachers have to provide exam oriented notes and materials.	3.86	1.008
I-26: The failure of the students is directly related to the teachers' course employment.	2.35	1.094
I-27: Teachers need to use their authority in teaching/learning if needed.	3.70	.963

Interactive Data: Autonomous Learning Practices in MOOLCs
Goal achievement
Each course is initiated with a purpose of improving language learning, good learning experience, and practicing language skills. For example, the objective of the Academic Writing course is to enable learners to study academic grammar, write well-constructed paragraphs, and learn the organizational structure of essays. About this course, the learners state that they managed to build a foundation for writing a coherent essay by practicing connecting ideas, improving the academic grammar usage and lexicology, and putting together a well-structured paragraph and essay.

> *"I have learned how to concise my work but first to find my ideas, to corroborate with examples (which was very difficult). I found it hard to develop my essay because of the disconnection of my thoughts, it was hard to find the links, my grammar was bad and still is, but I will learn better."*

Since the achievement is not properly defined in MOOLCs, it heavily depends on what the learners mean to accomplish. Examining the data, what the learners asserted to have accomplished overlaps with the initial objectives of the courses.

Independent learning
The indicators of independent learning in the MOOLCs are the necessity of developing learning strategies, the self-paced structure of the MOOLCs, the self-study materials, and the progress tab in the courses. Most learners assert that learning independently of a teacher-centric approach was fruitful to develop autonomy.

> *"Learning independently is useful, and you can learn at your own pace, but it is not enough because you need to interact with others and compare your knowledge level to that of other students."*

> *"All necessary materials are available, just using the program according the instruction but is crucial saying all success depends on the effort of the learner."*

Time management
The learners find the self-paced MOOLCs convenient to follow due to their timetables considering that almost 65% of them are employed and nearly 20% is the students with busy schedules. The participants value the MOOLCs eliminating the time and space constraints. Since the courses are entirely voluntary, time-management is what the learners often mention in their comments.
> *"It's convenient for my unfixed and ever changing timetable."*

Self-study materials
Innovative materials such as semantic clouds, clips, and videos filmed for fulfilling the course objectives are highly valued by the learners in the MOOLCs. The learners state that they enjoy the variety and authenticity of the materials that contribute to the improvement of listening, reading comprehension, critical thinking skills etc.

> *"...the tools are great and you are the main character in that process."*
> *"What I like most about the course is plenty of videos in which we can hear live fluent English speech, it helps us a lot in training our listening skills."*

Connectivist structure of the MOOLCs
The cMOOCs are designed to be interactive, collaborative, and communicative. The learners think that the courses are structured with interesting, motivating, and encouraging learning/teaching techniques due to the connectivist structure, which can actually change their learning behaviors.

> *"It is free, open source, anytime and anywhere, and unites the global sharing and new learning."*
> *"It gives me an idea of how other people from around the world think and learn."*

Lecturer/mentor-learner relationship
The lecturers and mentors in the courses became available to the learners for feedback, consultancy, guidance, managing the clinics etc. The learners find the lecturers quite engaged, supportive, and encouraging. Some learners demand more personalized feedback and frequent one-to-one question & answer hours; however, bearing in mind the population, the learners learn to benefit from peers (e.g. peer-feedback) and self-efforts more.

> *"The tutors were supportive, patient, and witty. They found the time and the ideas to add their personal comments on many people's notes and encourage participants to continue to learn."*
> *"My only regret is that there are too many participants and I am not able to access teacher feedback all the time."*

Social Dimension: Interaction and collaboration
In each MOOLC, the learners have peers from all around the world, which enables learning from one another and studying collaboratively. The participants find it rewarding to have a stress-free language-learning environment where every idea and opinion matters.

> *"I think this course has been very interesting in every aspect, but the best of all is definitely the commentary feed, where you get to know the other learners and spread your own English skills as well."*
> *"You get to have various information coming from different resources, you just have to pick what is best and always keep your focus on your learning."*

Self-evaluation
Since the learning takes place autonomously in the MOOLCs, there is no one observing the learning process of the individual learners, nor is there an evaluation of individual gains. The course design encourages the learners to write self-reflection posts about their learning such as writing their own strengths and weaknesses in an open discussion forum, which mirrors the learners' positive attitudes towards self-evaluation.

> *"It is easy to review and reflect, and it was motivating that I could see my progress."*

Discussion and Conclusions
Learner autonomy in MOOLCs
Although learner autonomy, autonomous language learning, and autonomous learning practices have often been studied in traditional and some online learning environments. However, they have not been addressed thoroughly in a massive online language-learning environment. This study presents to what extent the MOOLC participants are autonomous, particularly the learners' perception of their own roles and teachers' roles in learning, as well as what autonomous learning practices they are involved in MOOLCs.

The seven dimensions of the Autonomous Learning Activity Scale (ALAS) are interpreted, and the findings show that the learners are highly aware of their capabilities in learning English. A great many of them have positive attitudes towards their own learning abilities. This positivity can contribute to their achievement in massive online learning to a great extent. Furthermore, the learners know their responsibilities for making decisions and setting goals for learning, which is an indication of a high level of learner autonomy. It is highlighted that setting and pursuing an explicit goal is particularly important in online learning due to the vast amount of freedom and little control with learners' personal objectives.

The study also presents the findings regarding self-efforts. The learners show an ambitious level of engagement in out-of-school practices in English to practice or complement their knowledge. Registering these MOOLCs already indicates that the learners try to improve English by involving in informal learning settings. Coopersmith (1967, pp. 4-5) states that self-esteem is "the evaluation which the individual makes and customarily maintains with regard to himself," which is perfectly in accord with the item 12 in the ALAS. Reflecting on one's 'strengths and

weaknesses' addressed in this study is only one of the many implications of self-esteem. This psychological phenomenon promotes reflective thinking and allows improving the skills of autonomy.

Self-rewarding is often associated with learner autonomy. However, given the low frequency of Item 14, the learners seem to underestimate the value of what Bruner (1961) called "the autonomy of self-reward", which keep them continue learning by discovering (p. 26). The use of technology in learning can be considered as the starting point of this study. The study suggests that highly autonomous learners are able to utilize technological affordances at their disposal to meet their learning goals, which is replicated in Steel and Levy's (2013) study, from a different yet supporting perspective. Mutlu and Eröz-Tugba's (2013) study also supports that the use of technology enhances learner autonomy. It appears that there is a reciprocal contribution between learner autonomy and technology in attaining learning goals.

Learners' perception of roles in autonomy
The second part of the Evaluation-Sheet for Perception of the Roles (ESPR) analyzes the learners' perceptions of teachers' roles. In this part, it is found out that half of the learners think that they can manage to learn independently of a teacher whereas the other half either disagrees or is undecided about how learning might be like without a teacher. Some studies have already introduced the role shift from teacher authority to learner-centeredness in 21st century upon the arrival of online learning (Lamb & Reinders, 2008; Reinders & White, 2016). Similarly, the majority of the learners in the current study thinkthat it is learners' responsibility to build learning strategies to fulfill their objectives. Moreover, MOOLCs increase the affordances for language learning; therefore, the learners who develop digital literacies to cope with online learning platforms are more advantageous to develop more motivating learning strategies due to the abundant possibilities, teaching/learning materials, and means of access to knowledge in the MOOLCs.

Another remark within the findings is that self-evaluation is highly favorable. MOOLCs give the learners a chance to reflect on their own learning progress and performance. Accordingly, this facilitates the evaluation of performance and accomplishments directly and general competences indirectly such as self-reflection, time management etc. On the other hand, it is observed that the learners agree with the idea of self-learning most of the time and are still in favor of teachers' involvement in error correction and assessment. The institutionalized and teacher-centered learning experiences may prevent learners from picturing a learning setting where the teacher is not in charge of teaching them. Bárcena and Martín-Monje (2014, p. 3) argue that language learning is not limited to "the 'flawless' performance of a single teacher" in such learning ecologies where collective intelligence is appreciated. Thus, the perception of teachers' roles can evolve from authority to more knowledgeable participant. However, it should be noted that the learners' dependence on teachers' existence does not necessarily impede their autonomy. On the contrary, the transition in the role shift can be maintained sturdily with training and orientation through which teachers are peer partner. The reason for the need of such transition is that the learners may want to take charge of their own learning or take more responsibility for their own achievement; however, they may have difficulty in setting realistic goals, planning, monitoring their progress, and self-evaluation (Crabbe et al., 2013). In that case, the learner empowerment

that emphasizes handholding, scaffolding, and co-regulation suggested by Crabbe et al. (2013) or a similar approach, the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) by Vygotsky (1978) can be put in practice in such online learning contexts as cMOOCs.

Autonomous learning practices in MOOLCs
The interaction data show the learners' positive attitudes towards participating in the English MOOLCs and their opinions about digital and interactive (social) learning. In this study, the findings show that what the learners remarked to have accomplished overlaps with the initial objectives of the course.

An important perspective established by the learners is that learning independently of a teacher-centric approach is fruitful. Some learners state that it is liberating when *they* select what to learn, what materials and activities to engage, and when and where to be involved. Therefore, the learners praise the learner-centered course structure of the MOOLCs. Due to the unlimited access and self-paced learning cycle with the courses, the learners are able to manage their time and pace to plan around how much investment they would make to accomplish their goals. Most of the learners find this particular matter rewarding due to flexibility, convenience, and easy access.

The MOOLCs are based on connectivist MOOC (cMOOC) pedagogy where the course highly depends on the interaction and communication of learners, lecturers, and (guest) mentors. The learners have found this pedagogy employed in the MOOLCs very positive, non-threatening, and nourishing.The social and collaborative nature of the courses entertains the highly autonomous learners; however, it is not surprising that some learners had difficulty in "breaking the mold of passivity" mostly because education in many cultures is teacher-centered (Godwin-Jones, 2011, p. 5).

An autonomous learner searches after extra materials, new means of learning, reference materials, and various self-study materials to practice language outside of their formal learning context. The participants of this study endorse the usefulness of the various self-study materials in the MOOLCs and point out that the three MOOLCs brought in authentic, innovative, and autonomous learning activities and materials that are appropriate for self- and collaborative study.

The evaluation of learners' engagement with lecturers and mentors can be well explained from two perspectives. On the one hand, although it is not really possible for the instructor to provide individual help or feedback to the participants in the massive online courses, most learners are satisfied with the degree of teacher engagement and support. On the other hand, it is unsatisfying for some learners to depend less and less on a teacher. As the quantitative data in the study described, the learners still attach a more firmly established role to the teacher involved, which is entirely understandable at this point of transition. However, they will need to revisit their perception of teachers' roles in massive online courses.

Due to the nature of independent learning in the MOOLCs, self-evaluation is the most realistic way to adapt for the progress of the learners' language learning in MOOLCs. The course design encourages the learners to write self-reflection posts regarding their informal learning.

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Writing down their own strengths and weaknesses in an open discussion forum reveals that the learners have positive attitudes towards self-evaluation. It promotes learners' thinking about their interest, goals, capabilities, limitations, efforts, and ultimate achievements.

All in all, the MOOLCs are designed for everyone who can afford to be online. In this regard, it is important to understand the potentials and use of MOOLCs. It should be noted that adopting new learning ecologies might be difficult at the beginning in some educational cultures with some constraints and limitations, but enhanced learner autonomy in MOOLCs can bring in a more motivating, engaging, and reflective language learning. It is in the participants' judgment to go forward and experiment the interactive, communicative, and collaborative philosophy behind the MOOLC pedagogy, but they should develop globalized autonomous skills to practice such type of massive online learning ecology. Besides, teachers' and learners' role in learner autonomy should be redefined within massive online learning cultures. Above all, teachers, institutions, and learners should settle their attitudes and beliefs in regard to the educational value of MOOLCs.

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